

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the last full paragraph beginning on page 12, line 23 and continuing through page 13, line 5 with the following replacement paragraph:

In dependence on the aforesaid explanations, it is provided that a smooth transition is generated in the sense of the above explanation whenever an automatic hearing program switching occurs. In other words, the switching state P according to Figs. 1 and 4 is being undertaken automatically with the aid of an algorithm to recognize the momentary acoustic surround situation. In connection with the recognition of the momentary acoustic surround situation, reference is made to the two ~~international~~ U.S. patent applications with the publication numbers ~~WO-01/20965~~ US-2002-0037087 and ~~WO-01/22790~~ US-2002-0090098, which contents are herewith incorporated by reference.